I found Goethe in a very elevated mood this evening. We talked about the state of the newest literature, when Goethe expressed himself as follows:

"Deficiency of character in individual investigators and writers is the source of all the evils of our newest literature.

"In criticism especially, this defect produces mischief to the world; for it either diffuses the false instead of the true, or by a pitiful truth deprives us of something great that would be better.

"Till lately, the world believed in the heroism of a Lucretia—of a Mucius Scævola—and suffered itself by this belief to be warmed and inspired. But now comes your historical criticism, and says that those persons never lived, but are to be regarded as fables and fictions divined by the great mind of the Romans. What are we to do with so pitiful a truth? If the Romans were great enough to invent such stories, we should at least be great enough to believe them.

"Till lately, I was always pleased with a great fact in the thirteenth century, when the Emperor Frederick the Second was at variance with the Pope, and the north of Germany was open to all sorts of hostile attacks. Asiatic hordes had actually penetrated as far as Silesia, when the Duke of Liegnitz terrified them by one great defeat. They then turned to Moravia, but were there defeated by Count Sternberg. These valiant men had on this account been living in my heart as the great saviours of the German nation. But now comes historical criticism, and says that these heroes sacrificed themselves quite uselessly, as the Asiatic army was already recalled and would have returned of its own accord. Thus is a great national fact crippled and destroyed, which seems to me most abominable."

Goethe spoke of another class of seekers and literary men.

"I could never," said he, "have known so well how paltry men are, and how little they care for really high aims, if I had not tested them by my scientific researches. Thus I saw that most men only care for science so far as they get a living by it, and that they worship even error when it affords them a subsistence.

"In *belles lettres* it is no better. There, too, high aims, and genuine love for the true and sound and for their diffusion, are very rare phenomena. One man cherishes and tolerates another, because he is by him cherished and tolerated in return. True greatness is hateful to them; they would fain drive it from the world, so that only such as they might be of importance in it. Such are the masses; and the prominent individuals are no better.

"———'s great talents and world-embracing learning might have done much for his country. But his want of character has deprived the world of such great results, and himself of the esteem of the country.

"We want a man like Lessing. For how was he great, except in character—in firmness? There are many men as clever and as cultivated, but where is such character?

"Many are full of esprit and knowledge, but they are also full of vanity; and, that they may shine as wits before the short-sighted multitude, they have no shame or delicacy—nothing is sacred to them. Madame de Genlis was therefore perfectly right when she declaimed against the freedoms and profanities of Voltaire. Clever as they all may be, the world has derived no profit from them; they afford a foundation for nothing. Nay, they have been of the greatest

injury; since they have confused men, and robbed them of their needful support.

"After all, what do we know, and how far can we go with all our wit? Man is born, not to solve the problems of the universe, but to find out where the problem applies, and then to restrain himself within the limits of the comprehensible. His faculties are not sufficient to measure the actions of the universe; and an attempt to explain the outer world by reason is, with his narrow view, vain. The reason of man and the reason of the Deity are two very different things.

"If we grant freedom to man, there is an end to the omniscience of God; for if the Divinity knows how I shall act, I must act so perforce. I give this merely as a sign how little we know, and to show that it is not good to meddle with divine mysteries.

"Moreover, we should only utter higher maxims so far as they can benefit the world. The rest we should keep within ourselves, and they will diffuse over our actions a lustre like the mild radiance of a hidden sun."